

Fort Des Moines Historic Complex,  
Buildings 61 and 62  
(Double Barracks)  
Des Moines  
Polk County  
Iowa

HABS No. IA-121-I

HABS  
IOWA,  
77-DESMO,  
24-I-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

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Buildings Nos. 61-62. Double Barracks

This double two-story unit, identical in construction to those discussed previously, fronted on Gruber Street and the south side of the parade ground. The structure cost \$58,551.73 when completed on November 15, 1904. Like the other barracks, it had brick walls, slate roof, and limestone foundation. The brick was joined in running bond with red-pigmented mortar. The main building measures 71 feet 8 inches by 39 feet 4 inches. Two wings join either end of the main building; they each measure 39 feet 4 inches by 103 feet 4 inches. The structure, adhering to Plan 75G of the Quartermaster General's Office, originally had a two-tiered porch with roof extending along the front of the main building and the adjoining wings. Turned wooden columns supported the second level of the porch and its roof, and metal railings ran between the columns. On the front of the main building, double doors with 6-light transoms at each level were located near the wings. Two stairways led from the ground up onto the lower porch. At each level were six double hung windows, each with four lights. At the back side of the main building another two-tiered porch was attached.

Windows on the back equalled those in front, but two additional doors were located on the lower level. At the rear of the wings were single-tier porches. The outer walls of the wings each contain seventeen double hung windows, nine on the upper level and eight on the lower level. A door to the basement is also on the outer wall of each wing; basement windows number five, and there are two coal chutes. Each wing also has five double hung windows at both levels of its courtyard side, along with five basement windows. Windows throughout the structure have segmental arches and plain lug sills of limestone. The roof of the main building has a ridge and is topped with six corbeled chimneys. Each of the wings has a gabled roof with one chimney and two ventilators. On each gable, front and rear, are two double hung attic

windows; those at front were palladian windows and contain six lights, while those in the rear contain four. A firewall divides the structure through the center of the main building.

Total floor space of the barracks above the basement is 13,440 square feet. Each half of the various levels of the building was originally arranged as follows:

Basement:

Cellar, 33' 1" x 36' 3" (including store room and coal bin)  
Lavatory, 32' 9" x 36' 3"  
Boiler room, 32' 9" x 36' 3" (including coal bin)  
Hall, 11' 7" x 36'  
Cellar, 23' 6" x 36'

First floor:

Mess room, 33' 1" x 36' 10"  
Dormitory, 31' 2" x 38' 6"  
Hall and Vestibule, 11' 7" x 36' 8"  
Sergeant's room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"  
Store room, 8' 4" x 11' 6"  
Tailor shop, 11' 10" x 11' 6"  
Company office, 11' 7" x 19' 10"  
NCO room, 11' 6" x 15' 4"  
Cook's room, 10' 7" x 11' 10"  
Pantry, 10' 7" x 11' 10"  
Kitchen, 22' 3" x 36' 10"

Second floor:

Dormitory, 36' 10" x 100' 10"  
Hall, 11' 7" x 16' 4"  
Barber shop, 11' 6" x 16' 4"  
NCO room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"  
Day room, 19' 10" x 36'

Attic:

Room, 36' 10" x 100' 10"  
Room, 36' 8" x 37'

The interior of each barracks approximates those discussed earlier. The basements contain lavatory facilities evidently added in the 1930s. The first levels have plaster on metal lath walls. They have metal columns supporting girders throughout the level (repeated upstairs), although the girders are not visible in the front rooms. Sheet linoleum flooring is present. Similar conditions exist on the upper level of each building. Building No. 61 has 5-paneled doors and a partition near the north end of the dormitory. There, steel pipe columns support boxed girders and ornamental fresh-air grates are in the ceiling. The dormitory in Building No. 62 is basically intact without partitions, although two offices have been created at the north end. There is a turned baluster and paneled posts on the staircase leading from the lower level. Fluorescent lighting has been added throughout both buildings. Each attic shows evidence of roof construction from heavy timber framing, including a regular wood frame, 2" x 8", 16" on center, with collar beams running down the middle. Bracings 6" x 6" and approximately 30° off vertical support roof beams measuring 6" x 10". In Building No. 61 a room once existed at the south end of the attic.

As part of General Hospital No. 26 in 1918-19, the barracks were designated Wards No. 6 and 5, respectively. The building had radiating steam heat and electricity. There were twelve toilets, eight urinals, two sinks, four showers, and twenty-six wash basins installed. Repairs through 1922 approximated an average of \$222 per year. Plumbing repairs in 1927-29 consisted of installing flush valves and urinal troughs and replacing water heating units. In 1927 the porches at the rear of the wings were repaired, the guttering and downspouts were fixed, and the repaired areas painted at a total cost of \$1115.87. Four years later the fire walls were extended, insulation was provided around the chimneys, and the wiring in the attics was changed at an expenditure of \$538.80. Fire escapes were erected on the east side of Building 61 and on the courtyard side of both wings. In 1987 the vacant building was deteriorating. Many windows had been sealed. All original porches,

except those on the rear of the wings, had been stripped away and the structure was in fair condition.(23)

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23. Card for Building Nos. 61-62. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51; Plan, "Two Co. Barrack," No. 75G, April, 1902. 9 sheets. NA, RG 77. Cartographic Archives Division; Field survey notes, February 20-22, 1987.